

The "Daily" Lucretian

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For as boys tremble, and fear every thing in the dark night, so we, in open day, fear things as vain and little to be feared, as those that children quake at in the dark, and fancy advancing towards them. This terror of the mind, this darkness then, not the sun's beams, nor the bright rays of day can scatter, but the light of Nature and the rules of reason.

First then, I say, the mind of man (which we commonly call the soul) in which is placed the conduct and government of life, is part of man no less than the hand, the foot, the eyes, are parts of the whole animal; though many of the philosophic herd have fancied that the sense of the mind is not fixed to any particular part, but is a sort of vital habit of the whole body, which the Greeks call Harmony; and thence flows all our sense, and the Mind has no particular place for its abode. As when we say health belongs to the body, yet it is no part of the body that is in health, so no particular part, they tell us, is the residence of the mind. But in this they seem to be egregiously wrong, for often when some visible part of the body suffers pain, we feel pleasure in some other part to us unseen; and the contrary often happens in its turn, that a man disturbed in mind is perfectly well all over his body, in the same manner as when a man has the gout in his foot, his head at the same time is free from pain.

Besides, when our limbs are given up to soft sleep, and the wearied body lies stretched at length without sense, there is something within that in the very time is variously affected, and receives into itself all the impressions of joy and empty cares that torment the heart.

But to convince you that the soul is a part like other limbs, and not as a harmony, takes up the whole body, observe first that many members of the body may be cut off, yet often life remains in the rest; and again, the same life, when a few certain particles of vital heat fly off, and our last breath is blown through the mouth, immediately leaves possession of our veins and bones. And this will give you to understand that all the particles of matter are not of equal consequence to the body, nor do they equally secure our lives; but the particles of our breath, and the warm vapor, are of principal concern to preserve life to us in all our limbs. This warmth, this vapor, therefore resides in the body, and leaves our limbs as death makes approaches towards us.